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ABSTRACT

The determinants of interpersonal attraction were examined in 10 dyadic situations involving an actor's behavior toward a perceiver. For each situation, the intentionality of the actor's behavior was varied at three levels (intentional, nonintentional, no information), and the affective implications of the behavior for the actor were also varied at three levels (pleasant for the actor, unpleasant for the actor, no information). Subjects (N=144) took the role of the perceiver in each situation and rated their affective response to the behavior of the actor and their liking for the actor in the situation. Data supported the hypothesis that the affective implications for the actor and the intentionality of the actor's behavior in dyadic situations are important determinants of interpersonal attraction: these variables affect liking primarily through their influence on perceiver implications. The identical behavior of the actor may have very different effects on liking, depending upon the affective response and the intent of the actor. Results support an affective conception of liking in dyadic situations. (Author)

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Toward an Affective Theory of Liking in Dyadic Situations

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Toward an Affective Theory of Liking in Dyadic Situations

The present experiment was designed to test a new conception of liking in dyadic situations (Kerber & Clore, Note 4; Kerber, Note 3). This conception refers to the behavior of an actor toward a perceiver and the influence of that behavior on the perceiver's liking for the actor.

From our viewpoint, the most important factor that influences liking for the actor is the perceiver's judgment regarding the pleasant or unpleasant implications of the behavior for himself. The actor will be better liked to the extent that his behavior results in pleasant outcomes for the perceiver. However, the assessment of the affective outcomes for the perceiver is influenced by at least two factors: (1) the affective outcomes for the actor; and (2) the intentionality of the act.

In general, the outcomes for the perceiver will be most pleasant when he judges the implications for the actor to be similar to the implications for himself. That is, for positive situations, the actor will be better liked to the extent that the implications for the actor are also positive; for negative situations, the actor will be better liked to the extent that the implications for the actor are also negative. In many situations, judgments regarding affective outcomes for the actor will be based on emotional expressions, such as nonverbal cues regarding the affective state of the actor.

The second important factor that influences the affective outcomes for the perceiver is the intentionality of the act. The outcomes for

the perceiver will be most pleasant when a positive act is perceived as intentional; the outcomes for the perceiver will be most unpleasant when a negative act is perceived as intentional. In general, an act will be viewed as more intentional to the extent that the implications for the actor are perceived as pleasant, although intentionality may also be inferred from other information, such as the presence or absence of situational constraints on the actor's behavior.

An Example

A brief example should make our explanation of liking in dyadic situations much more concrete. Imagine that you (i.e., the perceiver) are walking down the sidewalk in a crowded part of town. Suddenly, a young male jogger (i.e., the actor) runs into you from behind and knocks you to the ground. Obviously, the immediate implications of this situation are negative for you, in part because you may have sustained physical injury and in part because you have learned that it is very embarrassing for an adult to fall down in public. However, our conception suggests that your assessment of the implications of this act for yourself will be influenced by the reactions of the actor.

In one instance, imagine that the jogger is laughing at your misfortune, that is, the outcome for the actor is very pleasant. As a result, the affective implications of this incident are dissimilar for you and for the actor; in addition, the actor's enjoyment of your displeasure may suggest that he intended to harm you. Therefore, the affective implications of the situation are extremely negative for you, and you extremely dislike the actor.

On the other hand, imagine that the jogger is very upset at

your misfortune, that is, the outcome for the actor is very unpleasant. As a result, the affective implications of this incident are similar for you and for the actor, and you may assume that the actor really did not intend to knock you down. In fact, the actor may verbally state that he did not intend the incident and may explain the circumstances that led to the unfortunate collision. Therefore, the affective implications of the situation are slightly negative for you, and you slightly dislike the actor.

The Present Experiment

Our conception of liking suggests that actor implications and intentionality affect liking through their influence on perceiver implications (see Figure 1, Panel A). However, an alternative interpretation suggests that perceiver implications, actor implications, and intentionality each have independent effects on liking (see Figure 1, Panel B). Previous research (Kerber, Note 2) has provided strong evidence for the influence of perceiver implications on liking. This experiment examined if variations in actor implications and intentionality influence both liking and perceiver implications (Figure 1, Panel A) or only liking (Figure 1, Panel B).

Method

One hundred forty-four undergraduates participated in this experiment. Each student was paid two dollars in return for their assistance.

Subjects rated descriptions of five positive and five negative situations, for example, a person helps you to move into your dormitory room, or a person damages your typewriter. For each

situation, subjects took the role of the perceiver, i.e., the recipient of the actor's behavior, and indicated their affective response to the behavior of the actor and their liking for the actor in the situation.

Each of the ten situations was presented in nine different forms. Information regarding the intentionality of the actor's behavior was varied at three levels (intentional, not intentional, no information). Information regarding the affective implications of the actor's behavior also was varied at three levels (pleasant for the actor, unpleasant for the actor, no information). Each subject rated each of the ten situations under one combination of actor implications and intentionality for a total of twenty ratings. Three additional ratings that were unrelated to this study were completed for each situation in the attempt to disguise the purpose of the experiment.

Results

For each of the situations, a 3 X 3 (intentionality X actor implications) analysis of variance was performed on the ratings of liking for the actor. For all ten situations, variations in intentionality had a significant effect on liking ($p < .05$). For positive situations, post hoc analyses ($p < .05$) indicated that the actor was better liked when his behavior was intentional as opposed to unintentional. For negative situations, the actor was better liked when his behavior was unintentional as opposed to intentional ($p < .05$). In addition, variations in actor implications also had a significant effect on liking ($p < .05$) for all ten situations. For positive situations, the actor was better liked when the

implications for the actor were pleasant as opposed to unpleasant ($p < .05$). For negative situations, the actor was better liked when the implications for the actor were unpleasant as opposed to pleasant ($p < .05$).

Identical analyses were performed for each situation on the ratings of perceiver implications. The results were similar to those on the ratings of liking for the actor. For eight of the ten situations, variations in intentionality had a significant effect on perceiver implications ($p < .05$). For positive situations, perceiver implications were more pleasant when the actor's behavior was intentional as opposed to unintentional ($p < .05$). For negative situations, perceiver implications were more pleasant when the actor's behavior was unintentional as opposed to intentional ($p < .05$). In addition, for nine of the ten situations, variations in actor implications had a significant effect on perceiver implications ($p < .05$). For positive situations, perceiver implications were more pleasant when the implications for the actor were pleasant as opposed to unpleasant ($p < .05$). For negative situations, perceiver implications were more pleasant when the implications for the actor were unpleasant as opposed to pleasant ($p < .05$).

Finally, ratings of liking for the actor and implications for the perceiver in the no information conditions indicated that, in the absence of information, subjects assume that both positive and negative situations are intentional and pleasant for the actor.

Conclusions

This study provides support for the hypothesis that the affective implications for the actor and the intentionality of the actor's

behavior in dyadic situations are important determinants of interpersonal attraction. While actor implications and intentionality may have independent effects on liking (Kerber, Note 2), the current data suggest that these variables affect liking primarily through their influence on perceiver implications. Perhaps these variables serve to refine the assessment of perceiver implications in the interest of accurate judgments about the actor. In other words, specific behaviors do not have unmodifiable affective implications for their recipient. Rather, the identical behavior of the actor may have very different effects on perceiver implications and on liking depending upon the affective response and the intent of the actor. When making decisions about another person, for example, with respect to the desirability of future interactions, the actor's behavior is more informative when we estimate his affective reactions and intentions.

In conclusion, the importance of the affective reactions of both the perceiver and the actor in this conception suggest a need for the development of an affective theory of liking in dyadic situations (see Clore & Kerber, Note 1).

Reference Notes

1. Clore, G. L., & Kerber, K. W. Affective schemata in the person perception cycle. Manuscript submitted for publication, 1980.

2. Kerber, K. W. Affective implications, intentionality, and interpersonal attraction in dyadic situations. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1978.

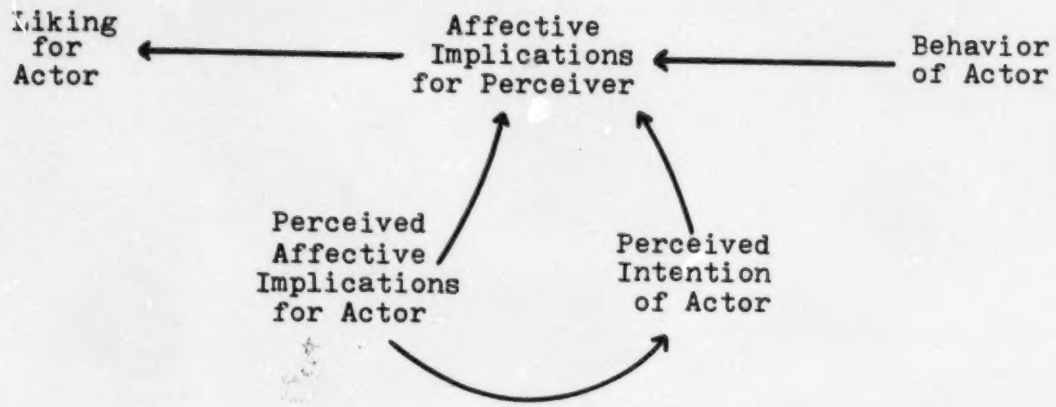
3. Kerber, K. W. Interpersonal implications and intentionality as a function of likableness in dyadic situations. Paper presented at the meetings of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, May, 1979.

4. Kerber, K. W., & Clore, G. L. Interpersonal implications and liking in dyadic situations. Paper presented at the meetings of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, May, 1978.

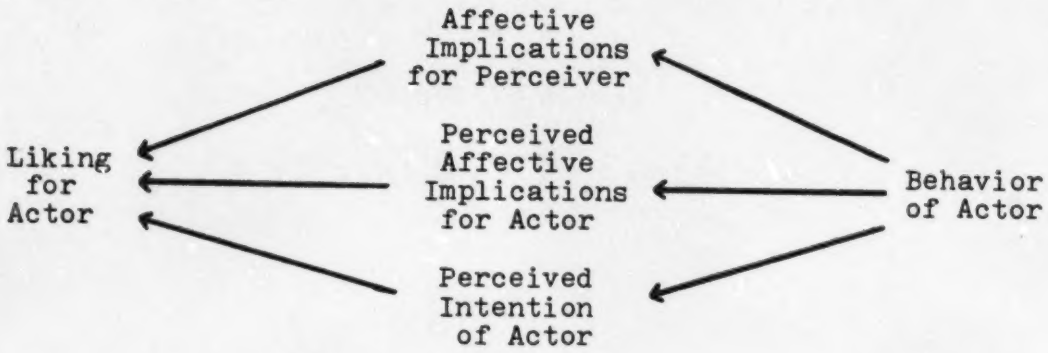
Figure 1

Alternative Conceptions of Liking

Panel A



Panel B



Note: Arrows indicate hypothesized direction of causality.